

ArtsHub Review ★ ★ ★ ★ ½ – *Single Asian Female*

FIRST PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY, 2017

Tastefully crafted performance reflects how Australian culture can be a nest of double-standards towards immigrants and women.



Emily Burton, Wil Hughes, Courtney Stewart-Smith, Hsiao-Ling Tang and Emily Vascotto in Single Asian Female, photograph by Dylan Evans Photography via La Boite Theatre Company.

Set in a Chinese restaurant on the Sunshine Coast called the Golden Phoenix, we meet a family that tells the tale of so many Australians. Immigration has been an integral part of Australia's growth as a nation, but as with many nations such as the US, UK, Canada and others, immigrants can face a very difficult task. Many families encounter difficulties dealing with racism, misogyny, white privilege, and assimilation; all of which are aspects that Pearl and her two daughters Zoe and Mei have to contend with. Pearl, an immigrant from Hong Kong, finds herself in an unfortunate situation which takes a heavy toll on her conscience. She tries desperately to reach out to her two children, but finds that Mei is less than willing to embrace her family and cultural heritage, due to the immense pressure of culture shaming from her fellow students. Zoe meanwhile struggles to come to terms with helping her family or establishing her own independent professional life. This performance continually unravels more and more depth to their daily struggle, in a very enlightening way, while not shying away from the problems that can be encountered by immigrants in Australian society.

The music by Wil Hughes is well balanced, thought-out, and highlights the talents of *Single Asian Female's* three strong female leads. Audiences are treated to a delightful range of songs that the audience will truly appreciate, and adds an extra level of dynamics to the family that the audience comes to love. Moe Assaad does a brilliant job in tying together various aspects of costuming and set design into a greater image, one that is realistic and relate-able. The set itself is a great construction,

creating a sense of a tight-knit family setting, which is kept separate from the face that this family shows to the world in the restaurant. The upper level platform is home to the family, and features two rooms; one room belonging to the daughters who are struggling to deal with assimilating to Australian culture, while the other room is that of the mother, who maintains her Chinese heritage and traditions – a literal reflection of how this family is being torn apart in different directions.

Claire Christian and Michelle Law have created a beautiful piece of how life can be completely unfair to our loved ones at times, but that despite all our differences, at the end of the day family is the most important thing we can have. *Single Asian Female* is a tastefully crafted performance that reflects how Australian culture can be a nest of double-standards towards immigrants and women, and are often compounded when intersectionality occurs particularly within those demographics. Hsiao-Ling Tang, Courtney Stewart, and Alex Lee are brilliant performers, and it is an immense pleasure to see such powerful performances; congratulations to the cast and crew in delivering such a beautiful and potent performance and shedding light on the struggles for Australia's minorities. While the Australian arts sector is a realm of progressiveness and inclusion, one can hope that performances like *Single Asian Female* will open further doors for minorities to gain more exposure and take a more prominent role in the arts.

Rating: 4 1/2 stars out of 5

Single Asian Female

Written by: Michelle Law

Director: Claire Christian

Designer: Moe Assaad

Composer/Sound Designer: Wil Hughes

Cast:

Hsiao-Ling Tang,

Courtney Stewart,

Alex Lee,

Emily Burton,

Emily Vascotto

Presented by La Boite

Roundhouse Theatre, La Boite

11 FEB – 4 MAR 2017

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Source: <http://performing.artshub.com.au/news-article/reviews/performing-arts/devon-cartwright/single-asian-female-253174>